

REMARKS

In the office action dated August 11, 2004, the examiner rejected claims 4 and 7-9 as being anticipated by Wells. (U.S. Patent No. 6,257,337). The examiner has categorized Wells as new grounds for rejection. However, the applicants respectfully disagree with the examiner's rejections and categorization of Wells as new grounds for rejection, because in a previous office action dated August 15, 2003, the examiner rejected claims 4 and 7-9, among others, as anticipated by Wells. The applicants responded to the earlier rejection on October 30, 2003 with claim amendments and argument. The amendments and arguments were evidently persuasive to the examiner, as the examiner allowed a number of other claims, with respect to claims 4 and 7-9, failed to state that the arguments were unpersuasive or answer the substance of the arguments per MPEP 707.07(f), failed to maintain the rejection as to claims 4 and 7-9 per MPEP 707.07(e), and opted instead to reject claims 4 and 7-9 as anticipated by new prior art (U.S. Patent No. 4,099,560 issued to Fischer et al. and U.S. Patent No. 3,858,401 issued to Watkins) in an office action dated January 15, 2004. In view of the previous examination of the application with respect to Wells and the examiner's implicit agreement with the amendments and arguments of October 30, 2003, the applicants respectfully ask the examiner to reconsider the present rejections of claims 4 and 7-9.

Should the examiner maintain the rejections of claims 4 and 7-9 as anticipated by Wells, the applicants reassert the arguments of October 30, 2003 and request the examiner to substantively respond to these arguments in accordance with MPEP 707.07(f). Additionally, the following arguments and amendments are tendered: Claim 4 requires the introduction of a liquid composition into the inflatable module for ballast. This limitation is simply not disclosed in Wells, nor does the examiner assert that it is. Claims 7-8 require selective inflation of the buoyancy modules, and claim 9 requires inflation of the buoyancy modules using an inflation control system for selectively inflating the modules. Wells, on the other

hand, teaches a method of installing a plurality of inflatable modules where the modules are installed at joint between two riser sections as the riser is being run, and inflating and lowering each buoyancy module before installing the next buoyancy module. Thus, Wells discloses sequential inflation of the buoyancy modules, not selective inflation.

Claims 4 and 7-9 are not anticipated by either Fischer or Watkins. Claims 3-25 are pending in the application. Allowance of claims 3-25 and passage to issue is requested.

Respectfully submitted,



Brett T. Cooke
Reg. No. 55,836

Andrews & Kurth L.L.P.
600 Travis, Suite 4200
Houston, Texas 77002
713/220-3813 (office)
713/238-4285 (facsimile)
Customer No. 23,444

Date: 10 November 2004